

Starksboro Conservation Commission

July 28, 2025 meeting

**Starksboro Library, 5:30 – 7pm**

Draft Minutes by AMW

**Members present:** Margi Gregory, Robert Turner, Jennifer Lovett, and Jan McCleery

**Guests:** Susan Smiley, Tom Perry

**Meeting called to order** at 5:34 by Chair, Margi Gregory.

**Previous Draft of Minutes** of [6/30/25](#), were reviewed. Can be posted as a draft, then repost as finalized, and change agenda minutes. After that discussion, accepted unanimously.

**Discussion**

- **Visitor's comments:** none
- **Final review of bylaws.** approved and accepted with the edits from last week. Will send these to the town as well, with this month's minutes.
- **Suspension bridge rebuilding update and planning:** bridge is dismantled. Hoping for an informal bid process for the \$8,000 grant, still going through procurement process. Once go through bid process, purchase materials and bring in contractor (cables, concrete blocks), then rebuild the bridge elements through volunteers. Alice will work with Cathy around the loaning of the grant funded extractigators at the library. **Creekside Trail Maintenance update:** some of the plant signs were put up. a little bit of parsnip removal. Alice and Robert will work on the trees on the high trail before the work with the college students. Discussion around whether we should be working on the reed canary grass. Mowing looks good.
- **Plan Middlebury College Community Engagement student orientation, Saturday, Sept. 6, 1-4 pm. The students will help with invasive plant**

**control this fall.:** Jason Duquette is director of Center for Community Engagement at Middlebury College. Tabling the planning for this to our August meeting.

- **Discuss environmental concerns related to development along Rt 17:** the area is an area of highest concern VT Department of Environmental Conservation and VT Fish and Wildlife. This stipulation has no legal standing. Class 2 wetland, has 50 foot barrier. Development area is between the wetland and Rte 17 highway. Only open meadow near a wetland in the area. Many migratory birds use the wetland and meadow. 30-40 acres of open water, and marshy open wetland, beaver dams and then feeds into Hallock Brook with further wetlands downstream. Not designated as a wildlife crossing by Fish and Wildlife, but it is used for wildlife crossing. At the DRB meeting, engineer presented a new plan, but it wasn't accessible. Increased from 6-9 lots, one behind the beaver dam. Developer claimed a right of way, but not clear if there is one. Would the dam be destroyed for right of way over it? Would this cut off Hallock Brook drain and would this increase risk of flooding? If going with the original 6 lot plan, even 50 feet from wetland, the beavers and wildlife will be disturbed and likely leave. How would this impact the land's ability to absorb storm surge and manage snow melt?

Should we advocate for reduction in size of development, for keeping more area for conservation? Concern about hunting and trapping in conservation area and how that may impact beavers in the area. There are traffic concerns on Rt 17, especially in summer, lots of fast traffic, motorcycles. Fatal accident last summer at the proposed driveway site.

Discussion about whether the SCC would be interested in writing an advisory letter to the DRB to make specific suggestions about mitigating

environmental concerns. Jen will research how to advocate for a higher classification wetland to Class 1. Jan thinks the dam went out about 30 years ago, wonder if there were repercussions from that.

Tension between areas that are special to the community, and the need for housing. This will be expensive housing, will it attract families?

**Additional updates:** Municipal planning grant, have identified the consultant. Looking into feasibility of a community housing trust in Starksboro. Act 181 is doing some work on mapping potential housing sites and working with town planning commission. Planning commission continues to work on the bylaws of the zoning regs. Town plan expires next year, will there be significant changes? A lot of former Act 171 environmental impact planning issues in plan have been taken out of the plan. SCC can advocate for getting this back in, need to be sure that we are aware of planning commission's work and advocate within the process.

**Next Meeting:** August 25, 5:30-7:00

**Agenda for next meeting-** beaver management, review invasive removal plan, Plan Middlebury College Community Engagement student orientation, Saturday, Sept. 6, 1-4 pm, update on development up south (results of wetland classification process, whether Norris has submitted a new plan for development, further consideration of SCC role in advocating for environmental concerns), review the bylaws of the zoning regs.

**Adjournment:** 6:57